

NEW BEDFORD HARBOR TRUSTEE COUNCIL NEWS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TRUSTEE COUNCIL REACHES FINAL DECISION ON NEW BEDFORD HARBOR RESTORATION PROJECTS

The New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council has made final decisions on 17 natural resource restoration projects totaling up to \$9.331 million, designed to address the injuries resulting from the release of hazardous substances, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), into New Bedford Harbor.

In August 1999, the Council solicited ideas from the public, academia, and municipal, state and federal governments that would restore, replace or acquire the equivalent of natural resources injured in the harbor environment. A total of 35 ideas were received. The Council selected 17 restoration ideas for potential implementation and requested public comment on this selection. The Council reached its final decision on the projects after considering over 650 comment letters. The final decision allows the Council to begin the process of implementing the projects.

"These projects will help restore vital natural resources damaged by pollution," said Bob Durand, Secretary of Environmental Affairs and Trustee Representative for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. "As we move forward with implementation, we will be developing and protecting sustainable resources that will also enhance the harbor as a destination for residents and tourists alike."

"The decision process has required an extraordinary amount of cooperation and compromise on the part of everyone involved. I am confident that the selected projects will go a long way toward replacing the natural resources injured by PCBs," said Michael Bartlett, Trustee Representative for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Funding for several of the projects will be held in reserve until certain conditions are met or more information becomes available after further studies. Funding for all projects must be consistent with appropriate federal or state procurement law and may require open solicitations of bids before funds are awarded.

All projects and actual funding are subject to development of satisfactory scopes of work as determined by the Trustee Council and must pass environmental review and meet specific legal criteria as laid out in the original legal settlement. Council staff will work closely with project sponsors to ensure that they meet these standards prior to funds being disbursed.

A copy of the Record of Decision or the Final Environmental Assessment prepared for Round II may be obtained by calling the Council at 978-281-9136 or by accessing the Council's website. (<http://www.darp.noaa.gov/neregion/newbed.htm>)

The New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council is made up of representatives from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the U.S. Department of Commerce – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Department of the Interior – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Council administers a \$21 million fund derived from settlements with manufacturers that discharged PCBs into New Bedford Harbor. The fund is dedicated solely to the restoration of injured natural resources.

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RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

Funding would be provided for the following:

Acushnet River Valley Land Conservation Project (\$964,000) – The purchase of either a fee interest in or conservation restriction for 245 acres of land along the Acushnet River.

Aquarium Exhibit on PCB Impacts to Natural Resources (\$150,000 in reserve) - An exhibit to 1) explain PCBs and examine the effects of PCB contamination on natural resources, and 2) educate visitors to change their everyday behavior to have a positive impact on the Harbor and its natural resources.

Aquarium Salt Marsh Creation (\$750,000 in reserve) – A salt marsh would be constructed on the Aquarium site to be colonized with both low and high marsh plant species and animals.

Artificial Reef (\$500,000) – A reef (or reefs) would be constructed within Upper Buzzards Bay.

Buzzards Baykeeper (\$150,000) - Monitoring to determine whether Council-funded projects are being properly implemented and identify any potentially adverse effects to successful implementation.

Community Rowing Boathouse* (\$275,000 - \$25K for study/\$250K in reserve) – A study to evaluate the full range of potential lost recreational uses of the Harbor Environment associated with PCB related injuries to natural resources. Funding for a boathouse and additional rowing whaleboats is dependent upon the study's showing a sufficient loss of recreational boating in the Harbor to justify the cost of the project.

Marsh Island Restoration (\$750,000 in reserve) – Restoration of the salt marsh at Marsh Island, Fairhaven.

Marine Fish Stock Enhancement (\$1,950,000) – A feasibility study to determine whether a facility to raise species that have been injured by PCB contamination for replacement of species injured or to provide a clean food source for the food chain can meet the Trustees' goals. If justified by the study then funding would be provided for design and construction of the facility.

Nonquit Salt Marsh Restoration (\$150,000) – Installation of a new 100-foot culvert and removal of a tidal slide gate to improve tidal flushing of the 60-acre Nonquit Marsh, Dartmouth.

Popes Beach Land Purchase (North) (\$55,000) – The purchase and establishment of a conservation restriction on approximately 2.6 acres of land on Sconticut Neck, Fairhaven.

Popes Beach Land Purchase (South) (\$145,000) – The purchase and establishment of a conservation restriction on approximately 3.5 acres of land on Sconticut Neck, Fairhaven.

Regional Shellfish Grow Out System (\$500,000) – Shellfish would be restored through the construction and startup of a shellfish grow out up-well system or through funding of an existing facility to provide shellfish seed for transplant.

Restoration and Management of Tern Populations (\$1,232,000) – Management and monitoring of endangered roseate and common tern colonies at Bird and Ram Islands; establishment of nesting areas at Penikese Island; and stabilization of Bird Island.

Riverside Auto Wrecking Land Acquisition (\$675,000) – The purchase and establishment of a conservation restriction on four lots in Acushnet totaling approximately 14.3 acres of land.

Upper Harbor Confined Disposal Facility Enhancements (\$25,000 for study) – A study of the types of plantings to benefit birds and other wildlife that could be supported by the confined disposal facility

proposed north of Coggeshall Street, New Bedford.

Upper Sconticut Neck Shellfish/Sewer Installation* (\$700,000-\$150K study/ 550K in reserve) – A study to determine the sources impacting closed shellfish beds in Outer New Bedford Harbor. Results of the study could provide justification for the Council to release additional funds to assist in design and engineering to correct the problem.

Winsegansett Field Station (\$360,000) – Habitat restoration and environmental education projects targeting specific human activities on Sconticut Neck, Fairhaven.

* Project may go forward if the results of the study are favorable.